

FRENCH INDOCHINA

the poor are perforce monogamous. The kw permits to the king eleven legitimate wives, and only three to his subjects, but the number of concubines is limited entirely by wealth. Though Khmer women leave the parental authority only for their husband's domination, they occupy an honoured position in the home. A wife may bring suit against her husband with the aid of any male relative available, and even be granted a divorce. No distinction is made between the sexes in the inheritance of property: succession is based on the rank of the mother. When they become adolescent Khmer girls "enter the shade/" as it is euphoniously allied, and lead chaste and retired lives. Like so many Oriental women they only begin to live when they become mothers. Children hafe great respect for their parents and this attitude is inculcated by tradition and law. Parental authority, though tempered by time, is still preponderate. The father controls all the family's possessions, and may even sell his children before they come of age.

The Khmers are divided into three social classes: freemen, serfs, and slaves. Freemen have full civil rights and liberties—to which they are

attached*—excepting what they owe as royal service, taxes, and All the male population between the ages of twenty-one and fifty owes to the state ninety days of labour a year. Boys and older mea have lighter tasks; bonzes, Brahmans, and mandarins are exempt.

Tax are based on a tri-arntuai census made by royal officials who travel throughout the provinces. Freemen must choose a patron the of the capital: serfs as well as slaves are registered under the of masters.

The client-patron relationship grew up under the same conditions as did the lord-vasal feudalism in Europe. This

curious and

its uses in miitaiy campaigns and in the com-
to the Khmer Mugs, but its abuse led to numer-
ous Slaves formed an integral part of their
masters family*

were absolute property, now they exist solely for debts
rights. Enslavement annuls the interest on their debt,
but tie uatofidbed. Their legal status is
dearly defined:
sad service to the master and his

faaao&f.

H» be obtained for their marriage.

Taking flight or
in their master entails, severe
pupushmeQt.
Oa Us the food and board to his slave; if
he
hit or if the has been seriativity
maltreated, the latter
a is by dfeath, NOr can t master
MM A even change at